

Officials: No plans for animal gas chamber

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ABSTRACT

The American Humane Association, Animal Law Coalition, Humane Society of the United States, In Defense of Animals, Born Free USA and many veterinarians and animal welfare organizations support the bill, according to a newsletter from the N.C. Coalition for Humane Euthanasia (NCCHE).

FULL TEXT

Feb. 3--While work continues on a new animal ordinance for McDowell, local animal welfare advocates also hope a bill introduced in the General Assembly would ban the use of gas chambers in shelters throughout North Carolina.

McDowell County is ahead of the game and only uses lethal injection to euthanize animals. There are no plans to do anything different, said county officials, despite an e-mail circulating among animal advocates indicating that McDowell was considering a new gas chamber.

House Bill 6, called "Davie's Law," was filed in state General Assembly a week ago. The bill is named after a puppy that survived a gas chamber at a North Carolina shelter. The puppy was later found in a plastic bag in a Dumpster by people discarding their trash. If Davie's Law passes, it will ensure that no more animals will be put to death this way in a North Carolina shelter.

The American Humane Association, Animal Law Coalition, Humane Society of the United States, In Defense of Animals, Born Free USA and many veterinarians and animal welfare organizations support the bill, according to a newsletter from the N.C. Coalition for Humane Euthanasia (NCCHE).

"This law was introduced to ban the use of gas chambers at our animal shelters in North Carolina," read an email sent out to local animal welfare advocates. "Now it is up to all of us to make sure it passes."

If passed, Davie's Law would require humane euthanasia by injection of sodium pentobarbital, or an alternate oral version of the drug, for all animals put to death at county and city shelters. In North Carolina, 65 animal shelters euthanize animals primarily by injection and of those, 59 report using this method exclusively.

McDowell County is one of the 59 counties that only use lethal injection. It has been that way for about two and half to three years now. Before that, the county's animal shelter used concentrated carbon monoxide gas.

Sgt. Brian Walker with the McDowell County Animal Control said there are no plans whatsoever to use a gas chamber again at the animal shelter.

"There has been nothing said here at all about going back to a gas chamber," he said. "As far as we're concerned injection is the only method we're using."

Walker said he heard from someone yesterday who thought that the county would go back to using the gas

chamber for euthanizing animals.

"It is not something we are exploring," he said. "I don't know where they got that thinking."

County Manager Chuck Abernathy said there are no plans to go back to using gas.

"We made that change three years ago and I am not aware of any discussion to do anything different," he said. "It was made because we are of the opinion that this was the trend. We made that decision because it was a more humane method."

Local advocates for animals are hoping that Rep. Mitch Gillespie and Sen. Joe Sam Queen will support House Bill 6, or Davie's Law. A total of 32 county and city shelters kill animals in gas chambers made of cinderblock, metal and even wood, according to the NCCHE.

Credit: The McDowell News, Marion, N.C.

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